

**SPECIAL MEETING
CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2008
WESTERN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL
400 PHENIX AVENUE
EXECUTIVE SESSION: 5:30 P.M.
PUBLIC SESSION: 7:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at Western Hills Middle School with the following members present: Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Stycos, Mr. Traficante, and Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway. Also present were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Nero, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Votto, Mrs. Lundsten, and Mr. Laliberte.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. It was moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried that the member adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel and PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation (Possible Litigation – Caruolo Action) and CASA Contracts.

Chairman Traficante reconvened public session at 7:30 p.m.

The roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

I. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – February 25, 2008

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway and unanimously carried that the February 25, 2008 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

II. Public Acknowledgements / Communications

There were no public acknowledgements or communications.

Chairman Traficante stated that he would speak after the School Committee communications.

III. School Committee Member Communications

Mr. Lombardi stated that the committee was undertaking a difficult task. They are trying to balance a budget that has a short fall of between \$8 million to \$16 million. To date,

Page 2 February 25, 2008

they have made some cuts that have brought the number to \$4.5

million. There are additional issues that are contractual in nature and not in the purview of this meeting. He cautioned his colleagues that they have to be very careful not to dismantle the integrity of the Cranston Public Schools. He had before him approximately 120 e-mails that he had received regarding the EPIC Program. He commented that he attempted to respond to all of them. When one is dealing with \$16 million, one gets themselves locked into a position to shoot fish in a barrel. In his comments, Mr. Lombardi urged his colleagues to leave the EPIC Program alone. The benefits of the program far outweigh any cost savings they will have. As he said to people in his e-mails, he did not know if EPIC would come up, but he would stand in opposition to eliminate it.

Ms. Iannazzi, in her comments said that at the last School Committee meeting she misspoke. She may have indicated that assistant principals Ms. Jackie Striano and Ms. Lynn Wagner were not supportive of the Truancy Program. She misspoke because she was referring to the truancy officer and the truancy magistrate and not any administrator here in the district. She wanted to correct what she had said. She further commented that she fully supports the EPIC Program. She attended the Garden City Elementary School and went to LaSalle Academy where she enrolled in the Pegasus Program which is similar to the EPIC Program offered in Cranston. It teaches to individual skills and aptitudes. She didn't believe that the EPIC Program would be addressed at this meeting.

Mr. Archetto stated that he had received numerous telephone calls and e-mails. He had received one this evening before coming to this meeting from a parent, Ms. Julie Essig, who was frantic on the phone pleading with him to support the EPIC Program. He told her that he would support it. It is a good program for the elementary and middle school students.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway stated that, like Mr. Lombardi, she received countless e-mails and responded to all of them. She commented that she would not be supportive of looking at EPIC as an area to cut. She thanked all the teachers and families who have a vested interest in the children and for taking the time to get in touch with the committee members to share their experiences. As someone who still has a daughter in the system, she will not support cutting the EPIC Program.

Mrs. Greifer remarked that she was also in support of the EPIC Program. At this time, she would not bring it up as a possible cut. If the committee has to start looking at the \$16 million figure, like everything else in the budget, it will still have to be looked at, but the committee is not anywhere near that point.

Mr. Stycos said that his children benefited from the EPIC Program, and as Mr. Lombardi stated earlier, the committee has \$3.5 million to get to. He believed that the committee can do it without touching the EPIC Program. If the committee has to go further, he

would not say he will not support cutting EPIC because he will have to look at the trade-offs without cutting EPIC. If the committee doesn't get the support from the Mayor and the City Council, it will be a whole new ballgame.

IV. Chairperson Communications

Chairman Traficante told the public audience that he wanted them to divert their energy for the EPIC Program to the body that holds the purse strings which is the Cranston City Council. If the school district doesn't get the 5% cap which is \$4.2 million, then the committee will have to consider programs whether it is athletics or EPIC. He told the audience that they would not hear about EPIC tonight; it is an excellent program.

Chairman Traficante went on to say that this is the worst-case scenario he has seen in forty years. He has never seen such a catastrophic situation as he sees right now. He stated that he wished to speak about the current year. The Superintendent proposed a budget of \$131 million to move the school department forward. Because of the 5.25% cap, they had to bring it down to \$129 million. That is the budget the School Committee adopted. The City Council came back with \$126.3 million which created a \$2.7 million gap for the

school department. Adding to that, the State of Rhode Island abandoned their responsibility and level funded all communities, and Cranston lost \$1.1 million. That brings the committee to a \$4 million problem they are facing in the current year. That is why they are going through the Caruolo process. They are in the negotiation stage with the City Council and Mayor. If they are not successful, they will end up in a court of law. That \$4 million has to become part of their base. If they don't get the \$4 million added on to their base, they will be starting the year with a \$4 million or an \$8 million problem. He asked the public to please contact their City Council members asking them to negotiate with the School Committee. Next year the Superintendent recommended a budget of approximately \$12 million more than the current year. That number is \$8 million over the 5% state cap so they had to bring it down \$4.2 million. The committee has to cut \$8 million. They have already cut \$4.5 million in the following areas: District Wide Raises \$2,395,027; Asset Protection \$360,775; New Personnel \$924,070; 1 Special Education Director \$119,649; Personnel Director \$74,137; 3 Middle School Assistant Principals \$363,000; Auto Technician \$24,648; Health Care \$179,000; Dental \$11,392; and PDI Coordinator \$50,781.

Chairman Traficante went on to say that tonight the committee must make further cuts to make \$3.5 million to meet the 5% cap. This has not been fun for the Cranston School Committee. The committee does not want to dismantle programs such as athletics or EPIC. Cranston has been pro education year after year. This is an election

year, and everyone knows that there won't be a tax increase to fund this budget. They have to find the money to bring it down to a level. He noted that rather than having the public hearings open to whatever one wants to discuss, the committee would not have the public hearing process. If a motion is made to cut a particular item or program from

Page 4 February 25, 2008

the budget and once it is seconded, he would open up the discussion to the School Committee and to the public. He further stated that EPIC would not be on the table tonight.

V. Superintendent Communications

Superintendent Scherza told the committee that on the night he presented his budget to them he told them that it would take courage.

They took on a tough task. This committee is owed a debt of gratitude for what they have done with this budget.

VI. Public Hearing

a. Students (Agenda/Non-agenda Items)

b. Members of the Public (Agenda Matters Only)

VII. Consent Calendar / Consent Agenda

The following Resolutions fall under the Consent Agenda:

No.'s 08-3-1 (withdrawn); 08-3-2; 08-3-3; 08-3-4; 08-3-5 with addendum (in addition, remove Jason Hogan); 08-3-6; 08-3-7; and 08-3-8 with addendum.

ADMINISTRATION

PERSONNEL

NO. 08-3-1 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified personnel be appointed for the remainder of the 2007-2008 school year:

Tammy McLellan, salary to be at the eleventh step plus Masters plus 30 of the prevailing salary schedule

Education – University of Rhode Island, BS and MS

Experience – South Kingstown High School

Certification – Guidance, K-12

Assignment – Park View Middle School, Guidance, 1.0 FTE

Effective Date of Employment – February 26, 2008

Authorization - Replacement

Fiscal Note: 12336213 513600

This Resolution was withdrawn.

NO. 08-3-2 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following certified personnel be appointed as substitutes on a temporary basis as needed:

Laurie Andrade Health and Physical Education, PK-12

Matthew Souza General Subject Matter, K-12

Elizabeth Reichardt General Subject Matter, K-12

NO. 08-3-3 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified staff member be granted a leave of absence without compensation as provided in Article X, Section C of the Master Agreement between the Cranston School Committee and the Cranston Teachers' Alliance (Teacher Assistants):

Sandra Ellis, Teacher Assistant

Effective Dates: March 2008 to March 2009

NO. 08-3-4 - Whereas, there may be more qualified individuals who will apply for current positions, and

Whereas, certain positions became available after the teacher selection of July 25, 2007, and more senior teachers may elect to

occupy these positions under Article XVI of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and

Whereas, funding for certain positions is not assured for the 2008-2009 school year, and as a result, more senior teachers could elect to take a current position, and

Whereas, positions occupied by retirees must be posted each year, and

Whereas, there may be changes in student distribution, and as a result, more senior teachers may take a current position, and

Whereas, positions must now be made available for more senior teachers who are scheduled to return from leave, and

Whereas, because of these concerns, and in accordance with Title 16 of the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island, the Superintendent has recommended that the employment of certain teachers be terminated at the end of the 2007-2008 school year, and

Whereas, the Superintendent has sent prior notice to said teachers informing them of the specific reasons for their termination, and

Whereas, the Committee has provided said teachers with the opportunity to be heard in Executive Session regarding their termination,

Be it RESOLVED that said teachers be terminated at the close of the school year under provisions of Title 16 of the General Laws of the State of Rhode island, and

Be it further RESOLVED that the Superintendent notify those teachers of the Committee's action to terminate their employment.

NO. 08-3-5 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following individuals be appointed as athletic coaches:

Mary Tobin, Head Fastpitch Softball, Western Hills Middle School

Step – 3

Class – D

Playing Competition – Recreational

Experience – Youth Leagues

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED/First Aid Certified

NO. 08-3-6 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified personnel be appointed as substitutes on a temporary basis as needed:

TEACHER ASSISTANT

Johanny Felix

NO. 08-3-7 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the retirement of the following non-certified personnel be accepted:

Angela D'Ambra, Secretary

Administration

Effective Date: June 20, 2008

POLICY AND PROGRAM

NO. 08-3-8 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following Conferences be authorized:

Jerry Schimmel, Director of Special Education, to travel to Charlotte, North Carolina from May 7, 2008 to May 9, 2008 to attend the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center Conference (NSTTAC).

Page 7 February 25, 2008

Jaclyn Cambio and Lidia Cordeiro, both ESL teachers at Gladstone Street School, to travel to New York City, New York from April 2, 2008

to April 5, 2008 to attend the 42nd Annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Convention and Exhibit (TESOL).

Edd Spidell, pre-engineering/robotics teacher at the Cranston Area Career &

Technical Center, to travel to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from April 8, 2008 to

April 10, 2008 to attend the Robo Business Conference and Expo 2008.

Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that these Resolutions be adopted.

With reference to Mr. Traficante's earlier comments, Mr. Lombardi stated to the public

that in addition to contacting the City Council members, they should contact their state

legislators. The formula is too difficult and does not make any sense.

They are

beginning to see a recognition on the part of the legislators that there is not a workable

formula.

VIII. Action Calendar / Action Agenda

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

NO. 08-2-13 – RESOLVED, that the 2008-2009 Operating Budget, as recommended by the Superintendent, be approved.

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried to remove this Resolution from the Table.

Moved by Mr. Iannazzi and seconded by Mr. Lombardi to accept the budget for discussion purposes.

Ms. Iannazzi asked if the cuts take into consideration the additional \$25,000 for the Personnel Director's health care package. Mr. Balducci responded that it wasn't voted on the other evening. It would be reduced by another \$25,000.

Mr. Lombardi referred to the budget variance of \$3.5 million and asked about the amount of money to be saved for the middle school move. Mr. Balducci responded that the number would be down by another \$700,000 and that it would be factored in when the School Committee discussed it.

It was moved by Mr. Stycos, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried to reduce the budget by \$706,719 which is the balance of the savings by moving the 6th graders back to elementary schools under Scenario No. 4.

Mr. Lombardi referred to page 191 of the proposed budget for FICA. He noted that when comparing that number on page 191 to the Admin FICA/Medicare on page 192 of \$1.1 million, it was his understanding that the FICA number is higher than Medicare. Mr. Balducci explained that it is 6.2 versus 1.45. It depends on their date of hire. Prior to April 1, 1986, they would be subject to both FICA and Medicare. Post 1986, they would be subject just to Medicare. Most were hired after 1986 so it is a group being charged one piece of it. It is the federal guide lines that he has to follow.

Mr. Lombardi referred to page 192, Medical Insurance. The requested number is \$19.8 million, and the budgeted item last year was \$17.5 million. He indicated that Mr. Balducci had given the committee some numbers on the anticipated insurance rates. He asked if this \$19 million is a multiplication factor to get to that number. Mr. Balducci said that there was no cushion. The budget is not a realistic number. He indicated that this number reflects retiree health insurance as well.

Mr. Stycos remarked that the committee had received a memo tonight

from Mr. Balducci indicating that there will be twenty-one retirees coming off the district's health insurance by June 30, 2008 and that there are twenty-six people currently scheduled to retire. That is a net of five people. Mr. Balducci explained that the twenty-six retirees will be reaching the age of 65 sometime next year. That is what the twenty-six represents for 2008-2009. Sometime during that year there will be twenty-six retirees eligible for Medicare. On the twenty-one, they were eligible for Medicare this year. Mr. Balducci further commented that he is looking at the number in the budget of planning on an additional twenty individual policies. Based on this number, the district would be planning for five additional policies instead of twenty. They look at an average.

Mr. Stycos moved to change the twenty retirees to ten which would be a savings of \$89,500. He stated that he was doing this because of the updated projection on retirees and people moving to Medicare. There will be a savings in the budget.

Ms. Iannazzi seconded the motion.

Mr. Balducci indicated that the twenty could be reduced. Someone could be leaving the roles next year. It is based on their birth date. One could leave in July, one in August, and one in August, and one in September. The district will not realize a full year of savings.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Stycos stated that on the health claims there is a projected increase on the IBNR. This is for bills the district gets on its health insurance that is incurred in the current fiscal year but the district doesn't get the bills until the next fiscal year. If a person goes to the doctor on June 25th, and the doctor doesn't send the bill until July 15th, the bill will be paid in the next year. He would eliminate that increase in the IBNR because in the last two actual years the IBNR costs were \$1.6 million; and there is a \$300,000 cushion already. He didn't think they needed to make it a \$500,000 cushion. This is a relatively safe area to make projections because in five years they didn't do this.

Mr. Stycos moved to reduce the health insurance account by the projected IBNR increase of \$200,000 for a \$200,000 increase.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway seconded the motion.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway asked if this was a reasonable and safe cut to make at this time. Mr. Balducci responded that he was using this \$200,000 to project two years from now because it was as of June 30, 2007. He will not receive the 2008 figure until the summer of 2008. Depending on what happens, he may have to shrink the gap. As an

accountant, he takes a conservative approach. It may be an area they will have to revisit as they get closer for the next fiscal year.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Archetto moved to remove the Adult Education Program from the budget which would save \$200,000. Ms. Iannazzi stated that the actual amount is \$231,793.

Ms. Iannazzi seconded the motion.

Mr. Traficante mentioned to Mr. Balducci that they could generate additional revenue. Mr. Balducci indicated that it is closer to the \$200,000 figure because the amount was recognized as revenue.

Mr. Stycos stated that he would not be voting on this issue nor would he be discussing it. Because he works for Dorcas Place which is an adult education center which is funded by the State, he should not be voting on this because it may appear that he is trying to funnel people to his adult education center. He has written the Ethics Commission asking for an advisory opinion. Until that time when he receives an answer, he will not be voting on any adult education issue.

Mr. Archetto commented that it was his understanding that the Charter School may pick up this program so that it is not dead. The Charter School will have a program there.

Mr. Scherza explained that the Alternate Education Program for students in the Cranston Public Schools would continue. They have a partnership with the New England Laborers/Cranston Public Schools Construction Career Academy, and they have agreed to pick up the full costs of the Alternate Education Program and the alternate site for students. That will continue, and it will be removed for one year and upcoming years from the Cranston Public Schools' budget. It is a win-win situation. It is an in-kind service they are offering.

Mr. Traficante stated that because he is the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Charter School and an employee of the Laborers Union, he would recuse himself from voting on this amendment.

Mrs. Greifer stated that she had not given this much thought. She would be abstaining because she is on the Board of Directors of the Construction Career Academy.

Mrs. Gayle Dzekevich made a presentation to the School Committee on behalf of Ms. Deborah Salone, Director of the Adult Education Program. A copy of her presentation was distributed to the School Committee.

This Amendment passed with Mr. Archetto, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, and Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway in favor; Mrs. Greifer and Mr. Stycos abstained; and Mr. Traficante recused.

Mr. Stycos stated that Mr. Balducci has proposed that there would be a \$51,134 savings in utilities from the elimination of the use of portables.

Mr. Stycos moved to amend the budget to reduce it by \$51,134 in utilities and water savings from eliminating the use of portables by moving students back to the elementary schools.

Mr. Lombardi seconded the motion.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Traficante turned the Chair to Ms. Iannazzi.

Mr. Traficante stated that he had brought up the subject of special education at the last meeting. He met with Mrs. Lundsten, Mr. Laliberte, and Mr. Balducci to make sure that what he was proposing tonight is very realistic. He indicated that there are three excellent special education programs. The Sanders Program for middle and high school students has nineteen students there. Mr. Laliberte and Mrs. Lundsten had indicated to him that it is very realistic that this

program can be increased to twenty students by not increasing their staff. At the Horton Program which is for elementary

Page 11 February 25, 2008

school special needs students it is very realistic that the program has eleven, and it can be increased to fifteen students, two from within the city and two from outside the city. In terms of the Special Education Early Childhood Program, there are ten special needs students, and this program can be increased to sixteen students. There are eighteen general education students there, and it can be increased to thirty students. Without increasing staff, the Sanders Program can be increased from nineteen to twenty students, the district can experience \$50,000 in cost avoidance. The class at the Horton Program can be increased from eleven to fifteen which is an increase of four students in the city and two from outside the city. With this increase, they can experience \$120,000 in cost avoidance and \$120,000 in new revenue because of two students identified for a total of \$270,000. By increasing the Early Childhood Program in terms of special needs from ten to sixteen, the district can save in cost avoidance \$150,000 which is \$25,000 per student. By increasing the general education students in that same program from eighteen to thirty, the district can experience \$31,500 in new revenue.

Mr. Traficante moved to reduce the out-of-district tuition account by \$320,000.

Mr. Lombardi seconded the motion.

Mr. Stycos stated that he would like to hear from administration as to how administration feels that the district will have the right students to fill these spots. Mr. Laliberte responded that they are beginning to approach 100% capacity. At Sanders, they have nineteen, and with one more it is twenty. The student is in the district. At Horton, they have increased the numbers. As of today, they had another youngster. They have two students in the system that they are keeping their eye on. The district has been contacted by people from out of the district to place a couple of students for the coming year. They have two students to bring back. The numbers of students at pre-school level who need special services are growing. They see a larger number in that pre-school population.

Mr. Traficante commented that in terms of the Early Childhood Program, the district brought it back to thirty from forty. Mr. Stycos indicated that for the people paying the tuition rate, the district has run ads in the newspaper. Mr. Laliberte explained that they ran an ad for one week. Mr. Votto added that they ran the ad three times. They ran it three consecutive weeks on a Wednesday, and in the Cranston Herald two consecutive weeks. Mr. Laliberte commented that if they do it now at an earlier time when people are looking for places to send their pre-schoolers, the district could get twelve more students to attend. The district has always given preference to Cranston parents, but there is a lot of people from outside the City who work in

the City who will want to take advantage of it. He feels the district can fill twelve more slots of general education students.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Page 12 February 25, 2008

Mr. Traficante moved to increase the miscellaneous revenue account by \$151,500.

Mr. Lombardi seconded the motion.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Ms. Iannazzi returned the Chair to Mr. Traficante.

Ms. Iannazzi moved to amend the budget to reflect an additional savings of \$26,403 from the associated benefits savings from the elimination of the Director of Personnel's position.

Mr. Stycos seconded the motion.

Mr. Traficante explained that the committee eliminated the Director of Personnel at their previous budget hearing. This is an additional \$26,403.

This Amendment failed with Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Mr. Lombardi, and Mr. Traficante opposed; Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Stycos, and Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway were in favor.

Mr. Traficante stated that the committee had already eliminated the position. Mr. Lombardi stated that he had voted no the first time; Mr. Traficante added that he had voted no also, but the position was eliminated. Ms. Iannazzi explained that the \$26,403 is the accompanying benefit package which was stated in the memo from Mr. Balducci. Mrs. Greifer asked Mr. Balducci for a running balance of the cuts thus far.

Mr. Balducci stated that the total cuts tonight are \$1,718,853. That leaves approximately \$1,785,709 of additional cuts.

Mr. Lombardi indicated to Mr. Balducci that at the last meeting he had asked him to calculate the savings from an increase in the insurance co-pay for the administrators from 10% to 20%. Mr. Balducci indicated that his response to that question should be in their packets. However, he noticed that the calculation included some personnel who should not have been encompassed in his response. This response needs to be tweaked. The savings of approximately \$138,000 will not be saved; it will be lower than this figure.

Mr. Lombardi moved to amend the budget to reflect an anticipated savings of approximately \$138,000 by increasing the co-pay for both

health insurance and dental of the administrators from 10% to 20%. The pool contains approximately fifty-one individuals.

Page 13 February 25, 2008

Mr. Archetto seconded the motion.

Albert Benetti, 24 Concord Avenue – He stated that this process was just a little too monotonous for the general public. The committee can talk about raising the administrative co-pay to 20%. He asked the committee to be realistic and honest with the public. Health insurance is the big bubble in this city. The committee is discussing issues right now with the City and the Mayor. He proposed that the committee go to the Mayor and talk to the Mayor, and get their bargaining units together. They should look at the overall health care costs. For once put everyone in the city on the same health care plan. It will save money right away, and all the city employees will be on the one plan. Then they will have one fair premium payment by everyone. He has been around since 1991 when he got caught in the banking crisis. He has been through administrations and all of this. Everyone knows what the issue is here. For people to exonerate themselves and say that part of the budget issue now which also happened a few years ago is no responsibility on people elected to office, no one agrees with that here. People have known for years that finances were changing. He feels that if they can get a savings

on health care throughout the entire city, it will probably eliminate having people laid off; eliminate the committee having to reduce a lot of the issues with the school system. Once that comes about, most people will say that at least there is some fairness with what is going on in the private sector. With regard to health care, the committee should not single out just administrators; it isn't fair. They can't single out teachers and have firemen and policemen get away with what they are getting away with. That is the savings needed. If he has time at night, he will try to be at future meetings with the City Council. They need health care savings for the city. 20% of \$138,000 is not going to do it, but as a whole city, it might be millions which will help with the budget this year.

Mr. Lombardi commented to Mr. Benetti that he raised a wonderful issue. Unfortunately, it is an issue that is premature for the School Committee because they are currently about to go into contractual negotiations. The administrators are not part of that group as are the teachers and all the other unions the committee deals with. Those may very well be topics of discussion at a later date. Universal health care is one of the issues and increased co-pays is another issue. The committee needs to present a budget to the City now. They need to balance the budget now. They can't balance the budget based on hypothetical contractual negotiations that will take place into the future. With the administrators they can do it right now, but they can't with the others because there are contracts in place.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Archetto moved to relocate the Sanders Program from the old Sanders School to the Norwood Avenue School for the 2008-2009 school year. The vacated building is to be turned back to the City for use or for sale. The school district would save on

Page 14 February 25, 2008

maintenance, custodial, and utilities by taking the building off line, and the relocated Sanders Program could become a revenue producing source. Because all the programs would be sent to the Norwood Avenue School, he didn't believe that the committee would be causing any problems. Mr. Traficante asked if there was a number associated with this amendment, and Mr. Balducci said that there was not. Mr. Traficante suggested that rather than making it into a motion, ask Mr. Balducci and the Superintendent to work on this and to get back to the committee on Wednesday evening with a particular number for the cost savings.

Mr. Archetto withdrew his motion for further study.

Ms. Iannazzi asked for a breakdown of how much would be saved from increasing the cost share to 20% for all non-union employees.

Mr. Stycos asked that this information be broken down by group of

employees with a total.

Mr. Stycos moved to eliminate the sewer charges in the budget.

Ms. Iannazzi seconded the motion.

Mr. Stycos explained that last year the committee proposed to the City that if they paid the school district's sewer bills the school department's custodians would pick up the trash at the playgrounds that are associated with the schools. Previously two people in a Recreation Department truck were driving around picking up that trash. The City Council did that; the school department didn't pay any sewer fees this year. He knows from being a member of the Recreation Department Advisory Committee the Recreation Department is extremely happy with the arrangement because that frees up those Recreation Department workers to do other work. He feels that the committee should assume that the City Council will do it again this year and reduce the school department's expense by \$108,931 by assuming that the City will continue to pay the sewer fees and the school department will continue to pick up the trash.

Mrs. Greifer stated that she knows a request was made to the City to see if they will do that again. She asked if the district has heard anything back from them. Mr. Balducci responded that he has not heard. Approximately two to three weeks ago he sent a memo to the Director of Administration asking him for a response. He followed up

with a phone call to make sure that he had received the communication which he did. He has discussed the topic with the Chair of the City Council, but no official communication has been received by his office yet.

Ms. Iannazzi stated that she will support this amendment. This is a request that the committee is formally making of the City Council. It is up to them to say that they won't

Page 15 February 25, 2008

continue this practice. If that is a situation they hand back, then the committee will deal with it when they hand us back another unfunded budget.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Lombardi stated that during the budgetary process essentially one of the bones the City threw the committee was reimbursing the district for textbooks in the event the police station was sold. Mr. Balducci indicated that this is a part of this year's budget deliberations for this fiscal year. Mr. Lombardi asked how the committee would carry this forward in terms of next year. He believed the figure is \$455,000. He asked if it was a receivable. Mr. Balducci responded that this is part of the discussions administration is having with their consultants as far as bridging the gap in this

year's budget.

Mr. Stycos referred back to the retirements and indicated that the memo Mr. Balducci gave to the committee tonight indicated that there are twenty-six people who have indicated they are retiring. Mr. Balducci responded that both of those numbers represent the number of retirees who have already left the system but are continuing to receive their health care from the school district who will reach the age of 65 and be eligible for Medicare. There are twenty-one this year, and twenty-six next year. Mr. Stycos asked how many retirees there are currently, and Mr. Balducci responded that there are seven.

Mr. Traficante turned the Chair over to Ms. Iannazzi.

Mr. Traficante stated that he was about to make a very bold move and a very bold motion. He hoped the committee would support him in this motion because he believed that the committee must begin now to send a very strong and clear message back to the State because of their abandonment of the responsibility of the public education here in the City of Cranston and throughout the State. As local School Committee members and as representatives of the students of this school system and especially the taxpayers of this City, the committee has to stop taking it on the chin in terms of the crisis that they are presently facing in the State of Rhode Island.

He went on to say that recently Governor Carcieri made a public statement where he was focusing on municipalities and other service agencies. He basically stated that the State cannot continue to be the ATM machine for the other municipalities and other agencies. In some cases, that may be true. However, when it comes to public education, that statement should not include public education. It should not be one of the victims of that statement or that kind of concept.

With that latter thought in mind, he is stating to RIDE and the State of Rhode Island, and he hoped the committee would join him, that the Cranston School Department can

Page 16 February 25, 2008

no longer be used as an ATM machine in support of a state-operated, a state governed career and technical school. The Cranston School Department can no longer afford to subsidize that state owned, state operated and state governed school to the tune of \$987,000 unless the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Governor, and the State come forward with their ATM card, he asked that the amount of \$987,000 be deleted from the budget.

Mr. Traficante moved that the committee cut the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center line item by \$987,000. Also, the committee give the Superintendent the authority to write the Commissioner of

Education notifying him of their action and the reason for their action and request in that same letter that the Rhode Island Department of Education grant the same privilege to the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center as it does to Davies Technical School in the Town of Lincoln which is fully and completely funded by the State of Rhode Island at no cost whatsoever to the local municipality, the Town of Lincoln, or any student in that district who attends that school. They do not have that same privilege here in the City of Cranston. It should be further stated in that letter that the situation they are in is not financially feasible and that if the Cranston students if they cannot afford to grant the district that additional \$987,000 to operate the vocational school that the Cranston students be given the privilege to attend Davies Vocational School with the same financial privilege that other students attend. It would be very similar to what the Town of Johnston is doing. Lastly it should be stated in that letter that if any of the above is not granted then the keys of the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center be handed back to the State of Rhode Island Department of Education and basically have them run the vocational school rather than the School Committee subsidizing it.

Mr. Lombardi seconded the motion.

Mr. Lombardi stated that he spoke to Senator Steven Ucci about this very topic. He is going to be introducing a bill to the state legislature that essentially does what Mr. Traficante wants to do which is to have

the State pick up the difference in subsidizing the Career and Technical Center because it is a state school and put it on the same plain with Davies Vocational.

Mr. Archetto stated to Mr. Traficante that this is a bold move, but the impact would be catastrophic. If the State doesn't pick up the \$900,000, he asked what the alternative would be. If the committee dropped the ball, that would mean that they would close down the school. Mr. Traficante responded that this is not what he is saying. Let the State come in and operate and run the school. Mr. Archetto asked what would happen if the State decided to go to litigation and where it would leave the school at that point. Mr. Traficante responded that right now it is a state operated school and a state governed school not fully subsidized by the State of Rhode Island. Davies Vocational School is fully subsidized by the State of Rhode Island. The Town of Lincoln pays zero

Page 17 February 25, 2008

to that particular vocational school. The schools within their district pay zero to attend; that is not the case with the Cranston Vocational School. He is saying to the State of Rhode Island that they either pick up the difference or they come in and run the school. They may have to eliminate some programs in order to reduce that deficit; that is their prerogative. The committee should turn the keys over to them and tell them to run the school. Mr. Archetto indicated that Mr.

Traficante is looking for justice, and he is absolutely correct. Mr. Traficante added that he doesn't want to see projects such as EPIC and athletics go down the tubes because the committee is subsidizing a state institution. Mr. Archetto again said that if the State doesn't abide by this decision he asked where it would leave the committee. He asked what the impact would be. Mr. Traficante stated that the school wouldn't close. They have already notified the Commissioner about this issue and that the committee is thinking of going in this direction.

Mr. Scherza stated that Ms. Coutu, Director of the school, has been frustrated time and time again by the inconsistency of the regulations that were promulgated in 1990, and to his knowledge have not been amended or updated since then. In the last decade, Cranston has not been receiving the subsidy that the Department of Education's own regulations call for. For example, the salary and benefits of the center's director; the cost of the counselors which is anywhere from \$1/4 million to a \$1/3 million a year. The districts have not seen any of this money for the past ten years. The State is supposed to pick up the custodial and maintenance pieces in the building. They had the public vote on a capital bond to upgrade the career and technical schools, and literally very little or almost nothing was spent on the Cranston Career and Technical Center. The State is supposed to be paying for such things as climate and control, the heaters, and the air conditioning when they brake down, but it isn't done because when they don't show up for a day or two Cranston sends their people in.

The district incurs the cost so that its students don't suffer. When a window is broken, the State doesn't come to fix it. Mr. Zisseron sends one of the maintenance people to fix it when the State doesn't show up. They can't leave it broken and undone. They have identified approximately \$1 million a year, \$987,000 this past year alone, of costs that are the responsibility of the State Department of Education that they have not reimbursed the district for. They tell the district to submit their bill and never get the check back. He wants to force the issue, and if need be, bring the issue before the Board of Regents and the General Assembly to say to the legislature and the Department of Education, "You make us live by your rules, and you should also live by your own rules." Mr. Traficante is very correct when he says that when the district pays that money that means that when the state legislature gives the district an increase of 3%, 1% off the top goes right back to the State. Districts that don't house a career and technical center don't have that problem; they get to keep all of their money. This district services students from Foster, Glocester, Scituate, Johnston, and from Cranston. Cranston should not be subsidizing the State; it is supposed to be the other way around.

Mr. Traficante added that the Johnstons, the Fosters, the Glocesters, and the Scituates do not help pay that subsidy. No part of that

subsidy is paid for by them. The only thing they pay for is to send their student to the school. He reminded everyone that Davies has the privilege of not charging any of their students to come to their school. Cranston should not be treated differently from the Town of Lincoln.

Mr. Lombardi stated that he seconded the motion for the sake of discussion, but this motion is not to shut down the vocational school.

It is an attempt to get a subsidy, a line item, handled by someone who ought to be handling it. If the State says no they are not going to do it, then the committee along with Mr. Balducci have to come back to the table and make up that \$987,000. Mr. Archetto stated that once the committee withdraws that \$900,000 line item, the budget will be short \$900,000. Mr. Lombardi suggested that if the State were to say no, and he is hearing tonight that they are not in compliance with their own regulations, so they would be on pretty weak legal grounds to say no in the first instance. He also felt there was a real convoluted and complex equal protection argument in all of this because if he knows that certain communities are being treated differently from other communities, it runs against the Constitution. If the State was to say no and the committee needed to come back and they were right, the committee would have to balance their budget in accordance with that decision. The committee wouldn't lock up the Career and Technical Center; they would come back and make up that \$987,000. He feels that it is a strong and viable message to be sent to the State of Rhode Island that Cranston wants

to be on the same footing as other communities. He stated that he would support this amendment.

Mr. Stycos stated that he supports the sentiment here. He supports going to the State to try to get the money, but he agreed with Mr. Archetto that if the committee cuts the budget by that amount, that is a lot of money. The committee is sitting here cutting \$100,000 or \$50,000, and down the road if the committee is looking for \$800,000 or \$900,000 to put the vocational school back in operation, that is going to be extremely difficult.

Mr. Stycos asked Mr. Traficante why he thinks it is necessary to cut the budget in order to push this issue with the State if the committee is on strong legal grounds. In response, Mr. Traficante said that here is a state government that is cutting municipal aid which directly impacts the Cranston Public Schools. Here there is a state government that is cutting basically educational aid. The district has been level funded now for two years in a row. Here there is a state government and the General Assembly that places a cap on the appropriation that the district can receive from a locality. It is going only in one direction. The district met with the State of Rhode Island two years ago to talk about the vocational school because the school at the present time does not meet code. They were asked to address this issue of bringing the building up to code, and Joel Zisseron went through the building and gave them the exact figure as to what it would cost to bring that building up to code. The answer was

that they don't have the money to give the district to bring the building up to code. Basically they said again to the City of Cranston that they should spend their dollars to bring the building up to code, and the school department doesn't have the dollars to bring it up to code. Here is a situation for the past several years where the committee has been subsidizing, subsidizing, and subsidizing, where the State has been going against their own rules and regulations. He felt that the committee and administration should send a very strong message to the Governor and to the General Assembly and especially to the Rhode Island Department of Education that the Cranston Public Schools can no longer afford to be in the vocational school business unless they are willing to fund it according to their rules and their regulations. This is a very serious crisis the district is facing. Mr. Traficante can't see the district again contributing another \$1 million to a school that is state owned, state operated, and governed by a board that the district has no control over. He is staying to the State that they should take some action now. If they don't come through, then the committee and administration has to sit down with the director of that school and tell her that she has to find the \$974,000; she will have to cut back her programs and cut back her staff to meet the budget that is given by the State of Rhode Island.

Mr. Stycos stated that the Superintendent seems to think that the

committee is on strong legal grounds that they should be paying for this. He didn't understand why the committee couldn't pursue without cutting the line item. It worries him again that cutting the line item is going to lead to just what Mr. Traficante is saying. They will have to cut programs at the vocational school. Mr. Traficante commented that the committee is here tonight trying to make the AEP Programs self-sustaining. He is basically saying to the director of that school that she has to make that program self-sustaining; therefore, that is why he is suggesting that the committee cut the appropriation by that amount.

Superintendent Scherza pointed out that one option that would be available, and it should be given some thought and not done right now, and the Commissioner suggested this if the revenues aren't appropriate, this body can raise the tuitions to go to the school. That is something the committee can be giving some thought to for the upcoming year.

Mr. Archetto stated that he is not advocating closing or shutting down any schools. This is a great idea from Mr. Traficante. He is going on the offensive against the Governor and the State to do its fair share. He agreed with him 100%. He is concerned as a man who has served in the General Assembly for six years that he knows how they are going to operate. They will stonewall and head toward litigation. This is not going to be cut and dry and clarified after two or three months. However, if Mr. Traficante's intent is to send a strong

message to the Governor, he is all in favor of it. His concern is that if the money doesn't come as quick as the committee wants it to come, he asked what their contingency plan would be.

Page 20 February 25, 2008

Mr. Traficante responded that if the district doesn't receive the additional money from the State of Rhode Island, he will say to the director of that school in a motion that she make that program self-sustaining by increasing programs there, to increase revenue, or she cuts programs to cut expenditures, that is her prerogative.

Mr. Lombardi asked Mr. Scherza where the district is with respect to revenues from the Town of Johnston. He has heard rumors that Johnston was leaving and going to Davies Vocational. Mr. Scherza responded that he and Mr. Nero met with two officials from Johnston, and as of their last count, the Town had not forwarded any applications. He was told by some parents that their children were told that they could not apply here. When the district did get the applications, a good number of them were high-maintenance, special needs children which gave the impression that the Town of Johnston was dumping their high cost kids into the Career and Technical Center. Basically, they have not given access to the counselors to go in to provide the program overviews. He asked Ms. Coutu, the Director of the Center, to correct anything he misstated. He pointed out that the district has had a trend over the past couple of years of

somewhere between 85 and 100 students coming from Johnston to Cranston. By the Johnston School Department consciously keeping students from coming here and keeping it down in the teens or low 20's, that cuts Cranston's revenue stream by several hundred thousand dollars. The gamesmanship has to stop; it is not the first time. If anyone remembers, the district went through the same thing with regard to paying tuitions. It is a property right; every student in the State of Rhode Island has the right to go to either a charter school or a career and technical school. No district has the authority to stop that.

Ms. Suzanne Coutu, Director of the Career and Technical Center, stated that at the present time there are 32 applications from Johnston. Those are just applications; it doesn't mean those are acceptances. This current year there are 19 students from Johnston in the sophomore class, and the year before that she believes it was 83. The numbers are going down. The counselors will have access to go in to interview students, but the access has been limited from years past. The Center has also put an ad in the newspaper allowing students to give applications directly to the Career and Technical Center. The ad appeared in both The Providence Journal and the local paper.

Mr. Traficante asked Ms. Coutu if she would agree that Johnston is the largest pupil feeder from outside of Cranston, and Ms. Coutu indicated that this was correct. Mr. Traficante asked what would

happen if this School Committee raised the tuition rates. Ms. Coutu responded that they are already trying to keep students away from coming to the Career and Technical Center. The more the tuition goes up, probably the more they will try to keep students away. Mr. Traficante added that this would happen not only in Johnston but also perhaps in Glocester, Foster, and also Scituate as well. That is why he is telling this committee tonight that they have to send a message now that they have to stop taking it on the chin and tell them that they have

Page 21 February 25, 2008

to either appropriate the money to run their state operated school or the committee will look to Ms. Coutu to make that program self-sustaining.

Ms. Iannazzi turned the Chair to Mr. Stycos.

Ms. Iannazzi asked Mr. Traficante if the same mission could be accomplished from the revenue account, and Mr. Traficante said yes.

Ms. Iannazzi made a friendly amendment and it was seconded by Mr. Lombardi to increase the revenue account by this amount.

Ms. Coutu stated that as the director of the Career and Technical Center she felt compelled to speak about the Career and Technical

Center. She indicated that 1/3 of the West students attend the Center.

While she feels the same frustrations as the committee does and probably more because she deals with it every day, the State should be providing much more than they do. While she understands that the district needs to get that money from the State, she would put this school on any equal standing with any program in Cranston. These students are very successful. The students have a curriculum to follow aligned with GSE's, etc. It is not just a business aspect; they have to do their curriculum as well so it is not that easy to self-sustain. They do try to keep the program self-sustained now. In some cases, they are more successful than others. The program is very important to everyone involved.

Valerie Schullie, 27 Farm Street – She stated that there is not enough good adjectives in this dictionary anywhere in the world to explain how much it means to a Career and Technical Center student to have that education. There are EPIC students and special needs students and middle of the road students who may not be able to make it in the regular school. Her son who is a gifted and talented student would not have made it at West exclusively. Now he is applying to colleges. What gives him a head up is the Career and Technical Center. The committee has to guarantee that those kids will not be hurt. She didn't want to hear about middle school sports. The Center is equally as important as the Charter School. Those kids do just as much and are just as deserving as any other child in Cranston.

Mr. Traficante stated that no one is suggesting that the committee close the Center. He has been at the school many times and spoken to them. Tonight the committee is facing a major financial crisis in the City of \$8 million to \$12 million. The committee is not enjoying cutting programs or personnel. If the State does not come through with that money, he will look to Ms. Coutu to increase the tuition for her programs to generate more dollars or eliminate programs to cut expenditures. The district cannot afford to subsidize it any longer. No one is suggesting that the committee close the Center.

Page 22 February 25, 2008

Frank Flynn, CTA President – He stated to Mr. Traficante that this is a bold move, and in these times one has to take bold initiatives to try to generate some revenue. The proposal itself is playing high stakes poker with the lives of some of the kids. If he is not successful in getting that money from the State, the committee will have to cut some of those programs which will be a disservice to some of those kids and the staff who is housed in that school. They need to be very careful because the majority of the kids in that school are Cranston Public School students, and if they are not in those programs, they will be in some other program that the committee will have to fund. He warned the committee about throwing down the gauntlet to the State because everyone knows they are slow in responding. As Mr. Archetto said, they will stonewall the committee. He would hate to

see those programs and the wonderful things going on at that school get cut because the committee is taking a political stand.

Mr. Stycos stated that this is not a good idea. He agreed with the sentiment of trying to push the issue, but as it stands now, this is a proposal to increase the district's revenue. If the proposal passes and it goes over to the City Council and this doesn't work out. He agreed with Mr. Archetto that it is unlikely that the committee will get its way by June. Hypothetically, he is sitting on the City Council and he doesn't want to raise taxes because it is an election year so he accepts this revenue figure from the school department, and then the School Committee says it doesn't have that money yet. That \$900,000 the committee doesn't have yet. They will have to drastically cut back the vocational school. The City Council will say that all they are doing is accepting the number the School Committee sent them. They are not cutting anything. All they are doing is agreeing with the committee's projection on revenue. The committee would be making it easy for them to make the committee cut the vocational school. It is a mistake.

Mr. Traficante stated that his initial proposal was not to increase the revenue but to basically reduce the expenditure by that amount. It was brought forward in terms of a friendly amendment. He had no problem going back to the expenditure side which he initially proposed.

Mr. Lombardi stated that he didn't want to be reading to have been in support of the closure of the Career and Technical Center. He had the privilege of being Ms. Coutu's guest at their Open House, and they do phenomenal things there. He is hearing what Mr. Stycos's concern is, and he is worried now that Mr. Stycos has raised that issue. He is worried about the by-product of failure to either receive the money from the State as a revenue item or have the State pick it up as a cost avoidance item. He is concerned that the committee is \$1 million short and asked what they would do. An unfortunate by-product of that would be to cut the program or become self-sufficient. The committee heard the director say that she can't be self-sufficient. In spirit, I applaud what Mr. Traficante wants to do, but Mr. Flynn is correct that the committee is

Page 23 February 25, 2008

playing poker with the State on this issue and the lives of kids. He is concerned about Mr. Stycos's issue as well in terms of what happens if it doesn't come to fruition.

Ms. Iannazzi withdrew her friendly amendment.

Mr. Traficante stated to the committee that he wanted them to know that if the State does not come through he will be very strong in his position that they look to the director of that school and the

superintendent to either increase the programs. A Whole Foods program was mentioned by Ms. Iannazzi in the past. They have to look for these new, innovative, creative, and revenue-generating programs to offset that deficit, or, if that can't happen, the committee has to reduce its expenditure. He refuses to support a state-operated, state-governed school that by their own rules and regulations should be financing.

Mr. Archetto indicated to Mr. Traficante that he agreed with him in sentiment, and he understood what he was trying to do. Mr. Traficante is looking for justice, and he wants the State to pay their fair share; but look at what the State did to the district this year. It level funded them. He has no faith in the State, and his concern is that he agrees with Mr. Traficante in principle; however, his gut feeling is that the committee would be hurting the kids on this one. He can't jeopardize the students on this issue.

Mr. Traficante responded that he is not looking for justice; he is looking for money. He is looking for fair share. They treat one vocational school one way, and treat another vocational school another way which is not fair. He wants the money to offset the subsidy. He told the committee that it was a bold move; if the committee doesn't support it tonight, he would understand. He wanted the committee to know where he would be coming from in addressing Ms. Coutu in the immediate future regarding that subsidy and deficit.

Mr. Lombardi asked Mr. Scherza that if the first half of the Chair's motion were to pass which is to communicate with the Department of Education and insist that the district be reimbursed for that and stop there with no budgetary amendment on next year's budget on the issue, when would he anticipate getting an answer from the State on that issue. Mr. Scherza responded that he hoped they would get it fairly quick. He received a verbal answer in part this past week. There is no reason to think that they couldn't turn it around and get an answer to the district in a relatively short time if their position is articulated in writing.

Mr. Lombardi commented that in that case he would support the strong communication with the State without the budgetary ramifications associated with it. Then, come revision time, the committee can then comply their budget to this additional revenue source that they have rather than cutting it out now and having to deal with it later. The

Page 24 February 25, 2008

committee should go with the strength of a unified voice to the State on the issue, but he didn't know if they should strike it out of the budget at this point.

Ms. Iannazzi asked Mr. Lombardi if he offered this in the form of an amendment.

Mr. Lombardi moved that he offered this in the form of an amendment.

Mr. Archetto seconded the motion.

This Amendment was adopted unanimously.

Ms. Iannazzi asked Mr. Lombardi for an enunciation of how the proposal would now read.

Mr. Lombardi stated that the committee communicate with the State of Rhode Island seeking reimbursement for the \$987,000 net cost to run the Cranston Area Career and Technical Center; that the Superintendent has the authority to do so in writing; and in conformity with the same rights and privileges that are currently being afforded Davies Vocational School in Lincoln. He would add to the Chairman's motion that there be a deadline date.

Mr. Stycos mentioned the deadline date, and Mr. Lombardi suggested May 1, 2008 as a part of his motion.

Mr. Traficante reminded the committee that he had proposed cutting the expenditure by \$987,000 which was his original motion which was

seconded. The committee is now discussing his amendment as amended by Mr. Lombardi.

Mr. Lombardi added to his amendment to his motion to include a deadline of May 1, 2008.

Mr. Lombardi asked Mr. Traficante to repeat his motion to the committee.

Mr. Traficante stated that he had indicated basically the same things that Mr. Lombardi had discussed that they give the Superintendent the opportunity to write to the Commissioner expressing the committee's displeasure with the fact that the committee is subsidizing a school that is state run, state operated, and state governed, and that the committee is asking to be treated fairly by the State in the same manner that Davies Vocational School is treated in the State of Rhode Island.

Mr. Lombardi added that clearly the State pick up the tab for the cost of operating the Career and Technical Center with a deadline date of May 1, 2008.

Page 25 February 25, 2008

Mr. Archetto pointed out that the committee is not tampering with the

budget at all, and Mr. Traficante said he was correct. Mr. Archetto further commented that they are not tampering with that \$987,000; they are just voting to send the letter to the State Department of Education.

This Amendment as amended was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Traficante told Ms. Coutu that she shouldn't think that she escaped tonight. He would be coming back to her once this budget is settled. If there is still a subsidy deficit, the committee will be coming to her to generate revenue in that program to make it self-sustaining.

Ms. Iannazzi returned the Chair to Mr. Traficante.

Chairman Traficante called a five-minute recess at 9:17 p.m.

Chairman Traficante reconvened the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Ms. Iannazzi clarified a motion made previously. She stated that she had the minutes of the February 11, 2008 School Committee meeting, and at that meeting, she had made a motion to eliminate the Director of Human Resources. That motion also included the correspondent benefit package. So, the committee doesn't need action tonight, but the bottom line number should be reduced by \$26,403 in a vote that was already approved at the last School Committee meeting.

Mr. Balducci stated that \$1,992,518 has been cut leaving a balance of \$1,512,044. That is using the \$3.5 million number that was distributed this evening as a beginning point.

Mr. Stycos moved to reduce the elementary textbook account by \$156,410. That represents the cost of K to 5 music texts.

Mr. Lombardi seconded the motion.

Mr. Stycos commented that when the committee received the textbook list by priority, the K to 5 music texts, the social studies magazines for \$4,000 were lower on the list. The lowest item on the list was the K through 5 music text at \$156,000. What he believed what was said in a memo was the hope was that this money could be used to provide the grade 6 Reading Street materials. In the estimate of the savings for the middle school switch as Mr. Nero set them up, there is a savings amount and there are add-backs to that amount, and then they get the bottom line figure which they have made part of the budget. One of those add-backs is the Reading Street series. As things stand now with the budget, there is money in the budget for both the K to 5 music

Page 26 February 25, 2008

texts and the Reading Street texts. His amendment would remove

money for the K to 5 music texts which were judged relatively low priority by the administration.

Mark Colozzi, Music Program Supervisor – He reminded the School Committee that the current series for music goes back to 1987. The kids in the books look like the Brady Bunch. The listening materials are on vinyl. The problem is that the school department is no longer purchasing record players, so it is really laughable. He understands the predicament the committee is in. Every year the music texts are proposed, and this goes back to his predecessor, Dennis DiSano, who proposed the new series. It is getting to the point where it is pretty laughable. In some schools, they can't use the listening materials. He looked into converting the vinyl to CD's, and it is costly. Most importantly is that they are so dated. He urged the committee to weigh those reading materials and what the reading program currently has for their materials as opposed to the present over twenty year old music series.

Mr. Stycos asked for a response from administration to Mr. Colozzi's comments if they went with the music texts and not the reading texts what the consequences would be. Mr. Nero responded that they have to go with the Reading Street texts K-6 series. They are looking at a ninety-minute block for literacy. It is very important to the district. The priority has to be with literacy rather than the music program right now.

Mr. Scherza stated that it is a hard decision because they want to upgrade all of the areas and not say that one area is more important than another. In terms of Reading Street, literacy is the foundation of everything that is done in the schools. Right now they don't have any Reading Street materials for the 6th grade. They have to get those to upgrade that program. They have it K to 5, but not for the 6th grade. Although they are, they do have the music texts now, and even though they would like to replace them, he would rather see the district live with those for a year and fill the void with the literacy piece. As Mr. Nero pointed out, they have to teach in ninety-minute blocks every single day of the week. Right now it is a more pressing need.

Mr. Lombardi said that he was not reading this as an either or. It could conceivably be an area where they can't cut. He was reading that both Reading Street and the music materials are equally important for the purposes that they serve. The committee is at a point in the budget where they are about \$1.5 million off. He knows that they have some business to do on Wednesday evening, and he could foresee on Wednesday that they may be able to cover that gap of \$1.5 million. This may be an area where they can't cut. During the recess, he commented that the committee, and he applauded everyone on the committee together, has cut approximately \$6 million already, and they haven't affected education in a negative sense. They have done an admirable job. On Wednesday, they will be doing the very same thing. They will be looking at

administrative non-educational type issues that they have preliminarily discussed. He commented that he was supporting Mr. Colozzi and would vote against this amendment.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway stated that she agreed with Mr. Lombardi. At this point, she feels the music program needs to be taken care of because it is vital. It would be good to wait on this. She would not be voting to cut the music texts.

Mr. Stycos stated that the points were well taken. He withdrew his motion. If the committee has to deal with it on Wednesday, they can deal with it then.

Mark Colozzi – He thanked the committee for their comments. He thanked Mr. Nero for clarifying that the Reading Street series was going toward the 6th grade students. He suggested that if they could at least get their 6th grade series updated because he is concerned about the 6th grade in particular because they are moving to the elementary school, and it is going to be a different scenario for music education for those 6th graders than it was in the middle school. They would be purchasing the teacher edition, listening materials and books for the students which may save some money out of the

\$156,000 proposed. He would need to get the updated price on it, but he is guessing for one grade level it would be \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Mr. Stycos requested a breakdown of K to 5 and what each level would cost.

Mr. Stycos indicated that he had received an e-mail that made the point on professional development as to why doesn't the committee insist that the teachers have professional development after the school day. In that way, the district wouldn't have to pay for a substitute. He asked what the response is to this concern.

Mr. Scherza responded that most of the professional development does take place after school other than things that are put on by the Department of Education, and that is the only time the teachers have access to them. Mr. Nero added that the district pays a stipend to the teachers; they never pay during the school day; it is always outside the school day. However, if someone is attending a conference, the teacher can include it towards the number of credits that they need; but there is no double payment for a PDI during the school day. The teacher receives a stipend of \$29.00 per hour if it takes place outside the school day to get their eight hours of professional development.

Mr. Archetto commented that he works at a private school, and they advocate that if a teacher attends a conference or seminar for credit in order to maintain their certification they have to do it during the

summer months when school is not in session so they don't have to pay for the substitute.

Page 28 February 25, 2008

Liz Larkin, Professional Development Coordinator – She stated that the only time a teacher would receive a substitute coverage is when a special program is brought into the schools. For instance, it may be the I Read Program or a math assessment. Other than that, it is always after the school day. All those are not paid depending upon how many PDI credits a teacher has done. There are different ways of receiving payments. If a teacher completes his or her eight hours of PDI, they can still continue to take PDI credit, but they do not get paid for it. If she had completed her eight hours and continued to take PDI credit, she would not get paid a stipend for that. The majority of them are taken care of after the school day. Until the money was frozen for the principals, the principals also ran PDI's in their own schools for their own school base, and they paid out of those funds. PDI provides a wonderful service to the City of Cranston.

Mr. Laliberte further explained that in most cases if substitutes were used they were paid for out of Title II grants which is a grant specifically for professional development, and they can pay for conferences, substitutes, and teachers hourly, so it does not come

out of Fund I at all. Ms. Larkin further commented that they will be running an I Read Program training 3rd grade teachers, and there will be eighteen participants. For that they do need substitutes. Those teachers are getting paid for their school day, so they will not be receiving any extra money. They work with Mrs. Lundsten and Mr. Laliberte to arrange for any grant money.

Mrs. Lundsten asked the committee to keep in mind that many of the professional development type workshops that are offered by the Department of Education, for example the teachers participate in STEPS which is a math intervention program; and they are conducted during the school day. They refund the district or the district uses grant money for substitutes so they don't have a choice necessarily of doing it after school. With the math lead teachers they meet after school not to take teachers out of the classrooms. They are very conscious of not doing that. However, there are times when RIDE puts the workshops together for during the school day.

Mr. Stycos stated that last year the Charter School ran a deficit of \$23,000. He asked if the school department covered that \$23,000, and Mr. Balducci said that they did not cover it. He rolled in that deficit as part of their 2007-2008 school year so he created an account referred to as Contribution to Equity. He identified that line item as an expenditure account. So, if all goes well, and all the other accounts come in line, he created a surplus of approximately \$21,000 which will then be funneled back into the Equity Account to take care of the

deficit. They will be taking care of it by themselves by the end of this fiscal year. Mr. Stycos asked that in the meantime did the district cover that \$23,000, and Mr. Balducci responded that the district did not. Mr. Stycos asked if it is \$20,000 of bills that have not been paid for the previous year. Mr. Balducci responded that from the cash flow standpoint, they are operating with enough cash flow on a monthly basis to cover all of their bills, whether it is last year or this year. It is an

Page 29 February 25, 2008

accounting issue that they need to deal with. From a cash flow standpoint, it is not an issue. It does not affect Fund I.

Mr. Scherza added that the district's auditors would not allow that to happen. Even if they tried to do that, it would have been brought to the committee's attention in the audit report.

Mr. Traficante asked Mr. Balducci to explain to the committee how that deficit was generated. Mr. Balducci explained that like the district's Fund I budget the utility accounts within the Charter School were over budget, and there is a line item referred to as purchased services which takes care of incidental bills received from the owner of the building. That area was also over budget last year. It is those two areas that caused the \$21,000 approximate deficit which is being addressed in this year's budget.

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried that this Resolution regarding the Operating Budget be tabled to the February 27, 2008 meeting.

NO. 08-1-16 – RESOLVED, that the 2008-2009 Capital Budget, as recommended by the Superintendent, be approved.

CAPITAL BUDGET 2008-2009

BOND 04 – 25

Cranston High School West – Sprinklers \$2,400,000

Western Hills Middle School – Sprinklers

BOND 04 – 25

Cranston High School West – Bleachers \$ 150,000

BOND 427/529

Park View – Renovate Library \$ 100,000

Renovate Science Rooms \$1,700,000

Bain / Park View / Western Hills

BOND 04 – 25

Relocate and renovate four (4) portable \$ 400,000

**classrooms; 2 at Woodridge School and 2
at Arlington School
\$4,750,000**

Page 30 February 25, 2008

This Resolution remains on the table.

IX. New Business

There was no new business.

X. Public Hearing on Non-agenda Items

There were no members of the public who wished to speak on non-agenda items.

XI. Announcement of Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 27, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. Executive Session begins at 6:00 p.m.

XII. Adjournment

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Mr. Lombardi and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned.

**There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at
10:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Andrea M. Iannazzi
Clerk**